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THE
STATE
OF THE
Moral World
CONSIDER'D, &c.



Price Six-pence.

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THE

S. T. E.



General Catalogue

CONSIDER D.

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THE
STATE
OF THE
Moral World
CONSIDER'D;

Or, a Vindication of PROVIDENCE
in the Government of the MORAL
WORLD;
SHEWING

That there is no other Evil in it, but that arising
from the necessary Imperfection of Creatures. And
that this Life is a State of Discipline, to train us
up in Virtue, by which we are fitted for a more
perfect Society, capable of greater Happiness in a
future State of Existence.

By W. D.

*This Infancy of Being cannot prove
The final Issue of the Works of God,
By Love and Wisdom unexpressive form'd,
And ever rising with the rising Mind!*
Thomson's *Summer*.

EDINBURGH:
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in Town. MDCCXXXII.

THE

STATE



MORAL

CONSIDERED

OF A VINDICATION OF PROVIDENCE
IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MORAL
WORLD

SHEWING

That there is no other Religion than that which
from these things appears to be the Christian
that this is a state of Providence to try us
up in Virtue, by which we are fitted for a more
perfect State, capable of greater Happiness, in a
future State of Existence.

By W. D.

Printed by J. B. Smith, at the
Office of the State of Maryland,
in the City of Annapolis, 1776.
And sold by the Author, at the
House of the Senate.

AS IN THE

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in Town, 1776.



T H E P R E F A C E.

THE Subject of the following Dialogue will not, I hope, be unacceptable to the Publick, the Design of it being to assert the universal Goodness of God in the Government of the World, by making all Creatures to be proportionably more or less happy as they practise Virtue, which tendeth to the Good of the whole as well as to the Good of every Individual: And that Virtue is the Perfection and Happiness of all Men, and Vice their Misery by natural necessary Consequence; which demonstrateth that it is absolutely impossible for the vicious to commute the Matter any Way whatsoever, so as to expect to be as happy as the virtuous, but by living the Life of the virtuous.

If this small Attempt to vindicate Providence in the Government of the World from the mistaken Opinions of some concerning it, be favourably received; it may, perhaps, encourage some of greater Leisure and Abilities to enlarge further upon it. In the mean Time, if any think that I am in the Wrong, I do assure them that it is not thro' Design; so that if they will be pleased to show me my Error, I will receive their Instruction with Pleasure and Acknowledgment.



THE
STATE
OF THE
Moral World consider'd.

SECT. I.

A.



Seeing, my Friend, we are so conveniently met, when we have Time, and are not like to be interrupted in this retired Place, I would, if you please, enter upon a Subject that is attended with *Difficulties*, which I would fain have clear'd, viz. *The Origin of Moral-Evil in the Government of a perfectly good Being?*

B. You could not have proposed a Subject more worthy of our *Consideration*, in such a convenient Time and Place; but this
antient

antient Question hath been so well handled before, that, I think, little more can be said to *solve* it; yet I say, it will be well spent Time to go over what hath been already said by others, so we may be *fix'd* on a Subject of such *Importance*. For me, indeed, I never doubt that whatever particular *Ills* may be, yet there is no Evil in the *whole* of the Government of a perfectly good *Being* †.

A. That nothing is Evil in the *Whole*, and yet some Ill in the *Particulars*, which make up that *Whole*, sticks mightily with me. That there necessarily exists a *Cause* of all Things, the Things themselves demonstrate, and that he is a Being of infinite *Goodness*, *Wisdom* and *Power*, hath, you know, been gone about to be demonstrated, by some with admirable Success, after this Manner. They have gone thro' the principal *Phænomena* of Nature, and shown, That what hath been thought Ill by some, is only Imperfection, which can't properly be called Evil, seeing all created Things are necessarily liable to it; nay further, that every Particular, which we have the Means of knowing the Circumstances of, is demonstratively

† This wou'd be a commendable Government in one whose Wisdom and Power is not Perfect, but there is no Paralel between Perfection and Imperfection.



stratiously made the most useful and serviceable, that the Nature of the Thing is capable of: And that we ought by Parity of Reason to conclude the same of those Things, which we have not had Opportunity or Means of coming to so thorough a Knowledge of, it being only the want of such a perfect Knowledge of Things, that hindereth us from seeing that all Things are perfectly good in their Kind, as design'd and made by a Being of perfect Goodness, with infinite Wisdom to contrive, and infinite Power to execute his good Intentions. This they have done with respect to the natural World, to the full Conviction of all who attend to it. I wish they had attain'd the like Success, with respect to the Moral World.

B. If I am not mistaken they have, by shewing, That there is no other Evil in the Moral World, but what necessarily ariseth from the Abuse of that noble Faculty Liberty, with which rational Agents are endued.

A. I am so fully convinc'd by the Works of Nature, and by the Beauty and Strength of the Arguments a Priori, that there exists a Being of all Perfections; who, as he is infinitely happy of himself, could have no other End in creating all Variety of subordinate Beings, but to communicate to each of them, all the Happiness their several Natures

tures are capable of; making the inanimate for the Use of the animate, and they for the mutual Service of one another, all conspiring to the *Good* of the *Whole*. I am so fully convinc'd of This, I say, that I cannot agree with them in saying, " That by the Abuse of the Faculty *Liberty*, with which rational Creatures are endued, they have introduced Moral Evil, *i. e.* *Sin* and *Wickedness* into the World, contrary to God's Intention, and by this subverted the Order and Harmony established in the Creation ". Is not this a *Contradiction* to infinite Wisdom and Power, who could not fail to contrive and execute the Means of a good Intention ?

But by the Way, I think that this Character of the Deity, *viz.* That all his other infinite Perfections are subservient to the *Purposes of Goodness*, will not be disputed. Seeing if we suppose it otherwise, that he is a Being of infinite Wisdom and Power, not govern'd by *perfect Goodness*, but acting by meer *Will* and *Caprice*, or perhaps *Malice*, then he is the just Object of the greatest *Fear* and *Hatred*. Again, if he is a good Being, without infinite Wisdom, or without infinite Power, he is so far *Imperfect*, tho' he is the Object of Love, nay, he is the Object of *Pity* too. Such *Characters* of the *One* true general *Cause* are as absurd,

as that of supposing *Two*, the Ideas of which destroy one another.

The *Attributes* of the *Deity* are the different *Modifications* of his *All-perfect Mind*. His Knowledge or Wisdom is *intuitive*, as some of ours is, but mostly our Knowledge is attain'd by *Reasoning*, i. e. by comparing the *Ideas* he excites in us, and drawing Inferences from them. Justice and Mercy can't strictly be called distinct Attributes, but different *Acts* of *Wisdom* exerted in Punishment or Forgiveness, as they tend most to the Good of the *Subjects* on which they are *exercised*.

B. All that I readily grant, and it is to be regreted that the Justice of God hath been so misrepresented, by some in their *Systems*, as to be in the strictest Sense a Principle of *Cruelty*. But to return,

If this Liberty is a possible Thing of itself, and given to Creatures for good *Purposes*, even for the Beauty and Perfection of the whole *Creation*, and as you allow it necessary to the Beauty and Order of the *whole*, and consistent with the universal Wisdom and Goodness of the *Creator*, that there should be different and various Degrees of Creatures, whereof consequently some must be *less perfect* than others, and this *Liberty* implying a *natural Power* of doing Evil as well as good, and the imperfect Nature of

finite Beings, making it possible for them to abuse this their *Liberty* to the actual Commission of Evil; hence there necessarily ariseth a Possibility of Evil, notwithstanding that the Creator is *infinitely good*.

A. This Evil then is no other but what necessarily ariseth from the Imperfection of Creatures, and is *Imperfection*, which can't properly be called *Evil* or *Sin*, being inseparable in some Degree, from all created *Beings*, and most consistent with the *Designs* of a *perfect* Creator.

B. But let us consider what this *Liberty* is, and how the Abuse of it is the Occasion of *Sin*, for which we say rational and *free Agents* are *accountable*.

A. With all my Heart; for that will determine whether Men act, or not, contrary to *God's Intention*?

B. Liberty is defin'd to be a *Power of beginning Motion*, or a *Self-motive Faculty*, or a *Power of acting*, which Faculty or Power is exerted freely upon the last Judgment of the *Understanding*: Now, tho' the *Will* is necessarily determin'd by the last Judgment of the *Understanding*, this is only in a *moral Sense*, the motive Power being still free to act, because the last Judgment of the *Understanding* is no *physical Efficient*, but only a *moral Motive*.

Men

Men being thus naturally free, shou'd determine themselves to act according to the eternal *Law of Reason*, which God himself (being perfectly free) determineth all his Actions by, and as it is a *perfect Rule* to the most *perfect Being*, it is certainly a *perfect Rule* to his *imperfect Creatures*, who being made free, and with *Faculties* to discover this *Law*, Almighty God requireth, that they should act according to it. But they, by Virtue of this *Freedom*, without which they wou'd be meer *Machines*, incapable of *Virtue* and *Happiness*, act contrary to this eternal *Law of Reason*, and thus introduce *Vice* and *Wickedness*, for which they'll be called to *Account*.

A. That Men are not *necessary Agents* in a *natural Sense*, is certain, a necessary Agent being no Agent at all, but a *Patient*, and the eternal *Law of Reason* or *Nature*, which God requireth rational Creatures to act by, being the same with the *Practice of Virtue*, which tends to make them *happy*; (because it is inconsistent with the Goodness of God, who made them to be *happy*, to require any Thing of them but what tendeth to their *Happiness*) so it is own'd by all, by experiencing it true in Fact, that every one acteth by the *Appearance of Good* (the *Desire of Good* or *Happiness*)

ness being an *innate*, inseparable *Principle* from all *Creatures*.) But being *imperfect* *Creatures*, *i. e.* limited in their *Power* and *Faculties*, 'tis impossible, but that in some *Cases* they should not discover what is their *real Good or Happiness*, and so fall into *Vice*, by mistaking their true *Happiness*, and doing that which brings some *Degree* of *Misery* upon them; and this *Punishment*, the natural *Consequence* of *Vice*, will be for their *after Good*, by teaching them how to act in the like *Cases*; thus every new *Experience* will teach them to pursue their *Happiness* more *steadily*. In all this there will be found no other *Evil*, but that of *necessary Imperfection* in *Creatures*, still improving by *Discipline*; which is most consistent with the perfect *Goodness* of the *Creator*, with every *Thing's* being perfectly good in its *Kind*, and with every *Thing's* coming to *pass* according to the *Divine Fore-knowledge* and *Decree*, which cuts off all *Accountableness* and *positive Punishment*.

B. You seem to make a moral *Necessity* come to the *same in Effect*, with a natural *Necessity*; but tho' I own it certainly true, that the *Will* is necessarily determin'd by the last *Judgment* of the *Understanding*, or that *Motive*, which after more or less *Consideration*, seems to be most for our *Good*, yet the self *Motive Faculty* exerteth it self freely;

freely ; and you likewise intimate that every Action of moral Agents comes to pass by a *moral Necessity*, as unerringly as any Effect in Nature, according to the Divine Decrees, else there could be no Foundation for *Præscience*.

A. The Difference between the *Exertion* of the *Self-motive Faculty*, and the *Will's* moving the *Body* to *Action*, I do not understand, and that any Thing should move Body or Matter, an inert Thing, but the *Will* or *Mind* is impossible ; and farther the Mind cannot move the Body to Action, without an *Inclination* or *Disposition* to move to one Action rather than another, as she is determin'd by the *greatest Motive*, or that Motive which seems to carry the most Good with it. Whether *Præscience* can be built on any Thing besides this *moral Necessity*, I leave you to explain?

B. The Certainty of Fore-knowledge does not cause the Certainty of Things, but is it self founded on the Reality of their Existence.

A. The same may be said of Knowledge, without being much to the Purpose.

B. More particularly the *Foundation* of *Præscience* I take to be this. As one Man who knows another's Disposition, can before Hand tell what he will do in certain *Circumstances*; and a wiser Man still with greater

greater Certainty can foretell *that*. So the Deity perfectly knows every one's Tempers and Inclinations of their Minds, the Dispositions and Affections of their Bodies, and all other external Circumstances they shall be in; and farther can tell, what Motives will be presented to them, and how they shall be determin'd by them; all which put together, becomes infinitely exact, and is the Foundation of *Præscience*, without being the *Cause* of *Action*.

A. This seems to come just to what I have said; but tho' the *Paralel* upon your *Supposition* holds between the wise Man's and the Deity's *Manner* of foretelling *future Events*, yet the one is not the Cause of the Action which the other is. The Creature does not, you know, give it self any Faculties or Inclinations, but all is given to it by the *Creator*, (who, as he is perfectly good, could not give any ill ones) and besides his creating all with certain *Inclinations* or *Dispositions*, he orders all their external Circumstances whatsoever as he sees *best*, and so can't but know what Motives will be presented to them, and how they will be determin'd by them, and thus what shall come to *pass*, which can be no other than what he of his infinite Goodness *design'd*, and consequently not *Evil* or *Wicked*, tho' the Actions of some Creatures may be said to be
Evil

Evil or Imperfect in respect of the Actions of others, arriv'd to a greater Degree of *Knowledge and Perfection*.

B. This seems to lead to *absolute Fate*, every one acting what he could not but do, which takes away all *Choice*?

A. There is no doubt but that every one does what he sees to be *best* in every Case, and so could not do otherwise; to suppose one could chuse to act otherwise than what he thought best in every Case, is an absurd Thing*. If People were *necessitated* to act otherwise than as they thought best, this would be a *bad Fate* indeed! But to chuse to act upon the best Reason we can discover, is a *Freedom and Perfection* truly *valuable*. To say we are free from this *moral Necessity*, to chuse among indifferent Things, or to chuse one or more Things among many others exactly alike, is *Trifling*; because the Things being *perfectly indifferent*,

* I mean at the present Time, for he may think, after having got more Knowledge, that it would have been better for him to have acted otherwise. But still my Meaning may be mistaken here, by some who lay a great Stress upon our natural Power of acting, or being free from any external natural Force, to do as we will, as if I denied this. But I do affirm, that every one is conscious that he hath a natural Liberty to act as he wills. But then we are also Conscious, that we cannot Will otherwise in any one Case, but as we are determin'd by the prevailing Motive, or that Motive which we at present think will be most for our Good.

indifferent, we are as *necessarily indifferent* which to take: In common Affairs, we say, there is no *Choice* among such Things, I will take the next to my Hand.

B. To settle what you *advance* more fully, the Desires, Powers, Faculties, &c. of Creatures, should be enquired into, that it may appear, whether some do not abuse them, and so introduce Evil and Vice of another Sort than what can be called *Imperfection*; but let us rest a little.

S E C T. II.

B **H**AVING reflected upon what we was last discoursing, I find, that this *Self-motive* or *active Power* is no other than the *Soul, Mind* or *Will* herself determining the *Body*, which is only a passive Instrument to *Action*, and that this *Mind* or *Will* cannot be forced in a *natural* Sense, yet if she was not *excited* by some *Inclination* or *Affection* (which is in general the Desire of Good or Happiness) to Action, she would not *act* at all, being perfectly indifferent to all Action; and the *Desire of Happiness* being her inseparable *Principle*, she will always be *necessarily determined* (in a moral Sense, which can only be applied to the Will) to act by the *prepollent Motive*, or that which

which seems to carry the greater Good with it. Thus every Creature, of a higher or lower Degree, necessarily pursueth their *Good* as God hath *design'd*, who also giveth them *Means* of attaining that *Happiness*, which are their several *Powers* and *Faculties*; but as these in all Creatures are *more* or *less* imperfect, and the *Knowledge* how to apply them being best learn'd by *Experience*, it cannot be otherwise than that all Creatures should sometime be mistaken in the *Pursuit* of their *Good*; yet this *Mistake* of *Happiness* being some *Degree* of *Misery*, makes them *wiser*, so that they will pursue it more steadily after. This is the most effectual Way of *Teaching*, one not being so well convinc'd what is his *Happiness*, or what his *Misery*, as when he finds it by *Experience*. But we are next to examine what those *Powers* and *Faculties*, *Affections* and *Inclinations* of the *Mind* of *Man* are, so that we may know that none of them are *ill* as some imagine, or at least, we may see if every one keeps the *Ballance* among them, and governs them by the chief *Principle* of *Reason*, so as not to apply them to *evil Purposes*? In the mean Time, I think, that upon this Scheme there is no other Difference between *Virtue* and *Vice* than that between *Perfection* and *Imperfection*.

C

A. And

A. And that is so great a *Difference* as will not fail to make all who understand it, *love* and pursue the one, and *forsake* the other as much as is in their *Power*. But to go on to what you desir'd, which I shall do in *general*, a particular *System* on the *Passions* not being what you expect from me. And this I am the more willing to do, that as there is no Evil in the natural World, but what necessarily arises from *Matter* and *Motion*, and the *imperfect Nature* of all created Things, which yet are the *best* that can be *made*; so I say, it may be made further to appear that there is no Evil in the moral World, but what necessarily ariseth from the *Nature of imperfect Creatures*, who always pursue their *Good*, but cannot but be liable to *Error* or *Mistake*. But as all this Evil is only that of *Imperfection*, which is inseparable from all created Things whatsoever, it cannot properly be called *evil*, *wicked*, or *contrary to God's Intention*, but perfectly consistent with his *good Designs* which he could not fail to *execute*.

The *Desires*, *Affections* or *Passions* of the *Mind* are divided, in the general, into *Selfish* and *Publick*. The *selfish* or *private Passions* are such, as *Love of Life* and its *Conveniences*, *Love of Honour*, *Resentment of Injuries*, *Desire of sensual Pleasures*, or *Appetite*

petite towards Nourishment and the Means of Generation.

The *publick Passions* are such as the *Desire of universal Good* or *publick Happiness, Friendship, Complacency, Compassion, Love of Offspring and Relations.* The *private Desires* are called *interested* as they are *planted* in us chiefly for our *private Good.* And the *publick Desires* are called *disinterested* or *benevolent* as they are *planted* in us for the *Good of others,* so that considering the *private* and *publick Desires* as two *natural Desires* or *Dispositions* in us, we cannot be *happy,* but in *pursuing the Satisfaction* or *Ends* of both those *Desires* consistently with one another.

And this is the *Foundation* for *benevolent Actions;* the *End* which the *publick Desires* directly *excite* to, is the *Good of others,* which by *Experience* we find to be our *greatest Good,* which sheweth the *unexpressible Love and Goodness* of the *wise Author* of our *Nature,* in thus strictly joining the *Interests* of *Mankind:* So that the *generous Part* who do *Good* to others out of pure *Love and Affection,* come by this, to enjoy the *greatest Pleasure and Happiness* to themselves, and even the *selfish Part* cannot be *happy,* but by *promoting the Good* of their *Neighbours.*

Every one is conscious that he hath such Affections and Passions, and that by their being duly *ballanced* and *exercised* on their proper Objects he hath *Pleasure*, and on the contrary, *Pain*; it follows that none of them are *ill* of themselves, but given for *good Purposes*, and that whatever is thought to be *ill* among them, ariseth from their not being duly *ballanced*, or properly *applied*, which, you would say, should be the *Business* of the *superior Faculty*, *Reason*, which shall be considered, after observing that a *virtuous Life* is defin'd (in a large Sense) to be such a *Course of Action* as sheweth, that both the *Ends* of the *private* and *publick Desires* are consistently pursued, which promoteth, of Consequence, both the greatest *private* and *publick Good*; and on the contrary, so far as this is not *advanced*, thro' some of the *Ends* which the *Desires* excite to being pursued, and others *neglected*, such a Life is reckoned to be so far *vicious*. But more strictly, those *Actions* which *flow* from the *publick Desires*, are only reckon'd *virtuous*; and those *Actions* which *flow* from the *private Desires*, while the *publick* ones are *neglected*, are accounted *vicious*.

All the *Desires* then being *good*, or given for *good Purposes*, Evil ariseth only from the Abuse of them, as may be instanced in one which some have reckoned *ill*, viz.

Re-

Resentment. This Passion is of great Use to us in hindering both *present* and *future Injuries*, from these who may so far *mistake* their Happiness, as to pursue it in Opposition to ours. By our Resentment they will be taught that it doth not *ly* there; and when this Resentment goes so far with us, as to turn to direct *Hatred* and *Revenge*, this ariseth from a mistaken or wrong Opinion, that those who injured us, by thinking their Happiness would be promoted in so doing, did it thro' direct *Malice* and *Design*. This sheweth us how much our *Happiness* consisteth in having *true Opinions* of *Men* and *Things*, and the *Tendency* of *Actions*, that we may pursue the Satisfaction of our Desires aright; by which is meant the governing of the *Desires*; and in doing this is the *great Use* of *Reason*, which we attain thus. When we begin to live in the World, we are *governed* by others till we come to the Use of our Reason, which we do by Degrees; thus, by experiencing what Desires, when satisfied, give us the greatest *Pleasure* or *Happiness*, and by observing by what *Course of Action* we obtain'd such *Satisfaction*, and so comparing one Case with another which we *know*, we reason upon what will be the *best* for us to do in other *Cases*. In a *Word*, the *Use* of *Reason* in governing and ballancing the *Desires* is this. The *Desires* are the
Springs

Springs exciting to *Action*, our *Happiness* which is involved in that of the *Publick*, is the *End*, and *Reason* discovers or points out the best *Means* to that *End*. But the *Desires*, and the *Faculty of Reason* or Power to apprehend, judge and infer, being so far weak and imperfect in all Creatures; hence ariseth *wrong Opinions*, and that *Imperfection of Action* or *Vice*, in some Degree in all Creatures, as they are made *more or less perfect*, consistently with that Display of the universal Goodness of the Creator, in creating all Orders of subordinate Beings, who by *Experience* and *Discipline* will be going on while they exist (and it seems altogether inconsistent with the Perfections of the Creator, to *annihilate* his Works) to attain more and more *Knowledge*, to pursue that *Happiness* design'd them.

B. I perceive, by what hath been said, that it may be made out by Instances, that there is no *evil Desire* or *Affection* in *Nature* (and if it were so, it would not only prove the Creature *ill*, but the Creator himself who gave them) but that all which is called *Vice in Action*, there being none in *Intention*, ariseth from the *Desires* being weak and imperfect, and the *Knowledge* or *Wisdom* got by comparing and drawing Inferences from the Ideas which we have from Sensation and Reflection on what passes

ses within our Minds, *i. e.* our Knowledge got by Reasoning, which teacheth us how to pursue the *Ends* of our *Desires*, being also weak and imperfect; from this *necessary Imperfection* of Creatures, I see that all the *Irregularities* in the *moral World* may be accounted for; which *Irregularities* or *Evils*, tho' arising from the *necessary Imperfection* of Creatures, yet to *unwary Observers* seem to flow from *evil Intentions* or *Dispositions*. But to go through with this, would take in such a *Compass* of *Time* and *Particulars*, that no Man is sufficient for it. After all, I think by this *View of Things*, one of the principal Arguments for a *future State* is entirely cut off, *viz.* that brought from the *perverted Order of Things here*, Vice often flourishing, and Virtue falling into *Distress*, which infers a future State in which all Things will be set to *Rights*, by *punishing Vice* and *rewarding Virtue*.

A. Was it true that the *Order of Things* is *perverted here*, this *Argument* drawn from it in Proof of a *future State*, in which all Things are to be set to *Rights*, proveth rather the *contrary*. For if Things are *wrong* in this *State*, it is a *sbrewd Presumption*, that they will be *always so*, else they must say that he is another *Sort of Governor* who ruleth in the next State, than he who governeth in this: *Harmony, Order*
and

and *Design* must be begun here, else we can never expect that they will be improving in the other *World*. So that upon this *Scheme* where every Thing is as good as can be, there being no other *Disorder*, *Vice* or *Misery*, but what necessarily ariseth from the finite and imperfect Nature of Creatures in this their *State of Infancy*, who are still improving by *Experience* and *Discipline*, and attaining greater and greater Degrees of *Perfection*, *Virtue* and *Happiness*, which of Course fits them for a more perfect *Society*; Upon this *Scheme*, I say, a future *State* can only be built. This added to the natural Proofs of the *Soul's Immateriality* and *Immortality*, and to that brought from the *Inconsistency* with the infinite *Power*, *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of the *Creator*, who made Creatures to be happy, to annihilate them, and so deprive them of it, will amount to the compleatest *Demonstration* possible, except immediate *Possession*. More of this after. What is brought by *Materialists* arguing from the *Powers* of *Matter* against the *Immateriality* of the *Mind* or *Soul*, is so ridiculous, that when they come to examine ever so strictly into *Matter*, they know nothing of it, unless it be a mere passive inert Thing without any *Powers* at all. But to enquire a little into the present *State* and the *Disorders* of it.

SECT.

S E C T. III.

TO begin with examining what is meant by *Vice flourishing*, and *Virtue falling into Distress*; *Vice in Action*, (there being none in Intention, all Desires exciting either to private or publick Good) being the falling short of our greatest Good, either by the Strength of some private Desires, or the Weakness of our Reason to direct us in pursuing the Gratification of our publick Desires. This will never fail to bring a proportionable Degree of Misery upon us. And *Virtue* being the consistent Gratification of all our private and publick Desires, cannot fail to make us happy. So that in this Sense, *Virtue flourisheth*, and *Vice brings Pain and Distress*. If we could suppose Creatures with Desires contrary ours, so as their Happiness consisted in crossing ours; Them, as we have a Power of perceiving and approving *Virtue*, and disapproving *Vice*, which is by some nam'd a moral Sense, so we have also a publick Sense, by which we are pleased or displeased with publickly useful or hurtful Actions; Them, I say, we would condemn as vicious and wicked, tho' with Respect to themselves, the Gratification of their Desires would be good, and approved by their Neighbours of the like Senses and Desires.

D

And

And it would be as *reasonable* in them to *gratify* their *Desires*, as in us to *gratify* ours. If this were a possible Case, whoever of the two *Sets of Beings* were more perfect in their Kind, and became happy at the others *Cost*, those last would say, that *Vice flourished*, and *Virtue* fell into *Distress*. But no such *contradictory Case* can happen in the Government of a perfectly *wise* and *good Being*.

Vice's flourishing and *Virtue's* falling into *Distress* then, must be understood with Respect to *external Circumstances*. To know the Truth concerning this, I leave you to cast your Eye abroad into the World and make your Observations, and perhaps you may find that tho' *Riches* and *Power* are of great Use even in procuring the *Means* of gratifying of many of our *Desires* both *publick* and *private*, yet these are not the most *happy* who *possess* most of them, or they the most *unhappy* who have not so large a *Portion* of them: But that probably all *external Circumstances* are so ordered by *the Deity*, with Respect to every one as is most *conducive* to keep their *Desires* in the best *Ballance*, and to strengthen the *Publick* ones, which are like to be of the greatest Use to advance our *Happiness*, both in *This* and a *future State* of Existence.

B. There seems to be much *Truth* in this. But it being endless to go thro' *Par-*

ticulars, I will give you my *Opinion* in some *principal Cases*. We often observe the *Rich* and *Powerful* (who are the most capable by those Means to do the greatest *Good*, in which consisteth the greatest *Pleasure* a rational Creature can enjoy) very *uneasy*; because they apply them for the Gratification of *lower Desires*, as those called the Pleasures of the *internal Senses*, such as delight in Musick, Houles, Gardens, Dress, Equipage; or in Hunting, Feasting and other Pleasures of the *external Senses*, which tho' good in their own Place, and have a certain Degree of Pleasure attending them, yet cannot be compar'd to the Pleasures of the *Moral* and *publick Senses*, either for *Intenseness* or *Duration*, nothing yielding so noble, rational, exquisite and lasting *Pleasures*, as the Reflection on our *Virtue*, and our being the *Instruments* of advancing the *Happiness* of all those whom our *Influence* can extend to. And on the contrary, we see Men in low *Condition*, who mind nothing besides taking Care of their *Families*, and maintaining them by their daily *Labour*, and in being, in one Word, good *Neighbours*: We see those, I say, for the most part very *happy*; because they, not having the *Means*, never think of pursuing the Pleasures of the *Great*, which are very precarious and of short Duration. But the general *Constitution* of the *Moral*

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World

World with respect to such Things, I take to be this.

The *Desires, Powers and Faculties* of all Creatures being Good, and more perfect in the higher Orders of Creatures, I think it will be own'd, that those of the Creatures of the same Rank and Order are pretty equal; and as to the Differences that may appear in *advanc'd Age*, they are in great Measure owing to *external Circumstances*, as the *natural Constitution* of their *bodily Organs, Education, &c.* Those again are adapted to their several *Stations of Life*, certain *Qualifications* being requisite for *Magistrates, Teachers, &c.* which are not requisite for *Husbandmen, Merchants and Mechanicks, &c.*

Again, *Riches and Power* are given to those, who, the Deity knoweth, will make the *best Use* of them, or not *abuse* them, so much as those would do who have not got so much. On the other Hand, those who have not so great *Riches and Power*, can *act* their *part* better with what they have, than those who have more could have done in their *Circumstances*. And it is worth *observing*, that those who employ what *Talents* they have given them, tho' fewer or weaker, to the *best Advantage* that they can, are as *virtuous or perfect* in Proportion, as those who have the most and greatest *Talents*,
and

and employ them the best, which maketh all the *Verecous* content, easy or happy, being pleased with having done all in their *Power*. And now having view'd and considered the *State* of the *Moral World* with respect to the *Intentions* and *Actions* of *Creatures* and their *external Circumstances*, I must acknowledge to you, that there is no *Evil* but *Imperfection* in it. Yet you have a great many *Authorities* against you in this *Opinion*. Many crying, *That there is not one who doth Good, but all are wicked!*

A. Such *Declainers* always except themselves and a few of their *Elect Party*, who, they own too, have their *Failings* or *Infirmities*; which shows us, that what *Imperfections* those find in themselves, they, thro' *wrong Opinion*, take to be *wicked Principles* or *Intentions* in all others. But tho' such imperfect *Creatures* as *Men* are be liable to many *Mistakes* or *Errors*, in pursuing their *Happiness*, which is involv'd in that of the *Publick*; yet if it was well considered, there will not be so much *Error* *this Way* found in the *World*, as some imagine. Many, thro' mistake, pronouncing others, for the *Neglect* of some *indifferent Actions*, which they believe that *God* will *positively reward 'em* for the *Performance* of, to be in *damnable Errors*.

Virtue

Virtue then being the *Perfection* and *Happiness* of all rational Creatures, which all *covet* and *pursue*; and *Vice* their *Misery*, which none *love* or will *continue* in, when they shall find or be inform'd how to be more *happy*; consequently, one Man cannot be more *serviceable* to another, than to present to him such *Motives* and *Arguments* as will convince him that such a *Course of Action* (which are all those Actions that promote *universal Good*) will make him *happy*, which shortneth his *Way* to it. Nor can one do a greater *Injury* to another, than to lead him *wrong*, tho' both may be done with the same *good Intention*.

B. The *Mistakes* of some often *affect* others, and make them so far positively *unhappy*, such as *Persecution*, *Oppression* and the like; what shall we say of those *Cases*? can we suppose these will be for the *Good* of the *Sufferers*?

A. The first of these may proceed from *Love* to others, some thinking that to be of such and such *Opinions* can only *recommend* them to the *Deity*; and when they cannot persuade them to be of such *Opinions* by *Arguments*, they would force them to it, which is impossible. But more frequently it proceedeth from the *Wickedness* of their *Reason*, as doth always *Oppression*, both Parties thinking to advance their *Happiness*

piners by taking from their Neighbours, either by Fraud or Violence, what they *possess*. But if their Neighbours, the *persecuted* or *oppressed*, get *Power*, they will *Resent* it, as others will also do, who are not so nearly concerned, nay, the *Sense* of *Mankind* turns against them, which is also a *Punishment* to those who love *Honour* and *Esteem*. By all this Persecutors and Oppressors will be taught and punish'd for their *Errors*; besides when they shall come to the Knowledge of their *Error*, which they will certainly do sooner or later, in this or another State, it will be Matter of uneasy Reflection or *Remorse* to them, for occasioning so much *Misery* to others. And further, many of the *selfish Desires* being probably *useful* only in this *State*, the strengthening those, and neglecting to cultivate the *Publick ones*, will cast them far behind others in *Perfection* and *Happiness* in the next *State*.

For those and many other Errors of some, *affecting others*, they may be *design'd* by God for their Good, even for strengthening their *Virtue*, and shewing them more effectually, the *Evil* attending *Vice*, which is the Way to hinder them from falling into the like *Errors*, and that they may *teach* their Neighbours, the *Persecutors*, *Oppressors*, &c. the same by *Arguments*, or it that
will

will not do, to *resist* them, and *resent* the *Injuries* done themselves (which the Law of Self-preservation, as well as the Good of our Neighbours oblige us to do) so as make those *experimentally* know, that they can never advance their Happiness by *injuring* their Neighbours. And even while they do not meet with this, the very *Thoughts* of being liable to it makes them *unhappy*.

B. This State then, cannot be called a *State of Trial*, seeing the Deity certainly knows what all his Creatures will do, they doing no other *Thing* than what he designed they should do?

A. I have called it a *State of Discipline* to train us up in *Virtue*, which you see it is. For as we know that God who is perfectly *happy of himself*, could have no other exciting Reason to create us, but his own *infinite Goodness* to make us *happy*, it is impossible that it could be otherwise, but that when we were created *innocent* and *naked*, or without *Knowledge* of what tended to our *Happiness*, and what not, we should be sent here in our imperfect State to *improve*. And as it is inconsistent with the *Goodness of God*, who made us to be *happy*, with his *Wisdom*, who could contrive the Means to it, and with his *Power* to execute them, to *annihilate* us, and so *deprive* us of it; we may certainly conclude, that he will
take

take us to another *State*, when we are fit to act our Part there, where we will be still *improving*, those who are farthest advanc'd here in *Virtue* and *Knowledge*, being capable of the greatest *Happiness* in the next *State*; which is a *strong Motive* to excite us all to the *Practice of Virtue* in this *Life*.

B. Every one must think that short Argument *Conclusive* for the being of a *future State*, except those who are so *weak* as hardly to be argued with. I mean those who think the Deity to be an *imperfect* or *arbitrary Being*, i. e. one who acteth by meer Will and Caprice, inconsistently with any of his *Perfections*. Or those who think Annihilation a less *Evil* than Being, which none do, but they who believe that God is *Cruel*, and will make their *Being* a *Curse* to them, by making their *Misery* exceed their *Happiness*. But what should we think will be the *Condition* of *Children* who are removed from this State so soon, that they are nothing improv'd, nor even upon the other Scheme, capable of a *Trial*?

A. We are so far from knowing *every Thing* here (the Wisest may be said to know but little of what may be known) that *probable Conjecture* is a sufficient *Answer* to many *Questions*. Such Children perhaps, for any Thing we know to the contrary, may be sent again, in sounder Bodies, into

the World to *improve*. But suppose they do not, as they had no Opportunity to *improve* in the *social Virtues*, so they have not strengthened the *selfish Desires* in Opposition to them, and as their being so soon removed, is thus no positive Disadvantage to themselves, and may serve some good End towards their Parents or others; so the Constitution of the other State (as that of this doth) may require a Subordination of Beings, which of it self seems necessary to afford Matter of Action, and so of Happiness in every Society.

But as what I have advanced, *viz.* That every *particular Thing* which we know in the *Moral World* (as well as in the *Natural World*, which is adapted to the *Moral World*) is the *best* that can be made, to make up the *best Whole*, according to the *Design* of the most perfect Being. As we find this, I say, true in Fact, as far as our *Knowledge* reacheth; so we have all the Reason that can be to conclude, that as we *improve* in the *Knowledge of Things*, both in this *State* or in *others*, which God of his infinite Wisdom and Goodness may have design'd to place us in, we will still be more and more charm'd and satisfied with this *excellent Truth*.

The END.

